

Strategy Research Project

Applying Drawdown Lessons from the Past to Future Army Investments

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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The war in Afghanistan is drawing to a close and once again the U.S. Army (Army) is facing a drawdown. The cycle is predictable. When war comes, the Army expands and adapts as necessary to achieve the military and political objectives of the war; then, once the war is over; the Army rapidly reduces in size. By looking to past drawdown experiences, are there key areas of investment that will enable the Army to rapidly adapt itself to the future needs of the Nation? This paper examines investment decisions from three post-war drawdown eras from the Army's history: post-World War (WW) I (1919-1938), post-WWII/Korea 1946-1965, and post-Vietnam (1973-1980). Those investment decisions are described in terms of end strength, force structure, leadership development, modernization, procurement, doctrine, and readiness. The effectiveness of those decisions is then evaluated by assessing the performance of the Army in the first battle of the next war.

Applying Drawdown Lessons from the Past to Future Army Investments

Introduction

The war in Afghanistan is drawing to a close and once again the U.S. Army (Army) is facing a drawdown. The cycle is predictable. When war comes, the Army expands and adapts as necessary to achieve the military objectives of the war; then, once the war is over; the Army rapidly reduces in size. Throughout our history, this cycle has repeated itself over and over. Additionally, when war does come, our Army may or may not be prepared for the war it has to fight. This leads to painful lessons measured in blood and treasure at the beginning of a conflict quickly followed by efforts to never let it happen again. But it does happen, over and over again. Why? Is it possible to avoid these painful lessons? Are there enduring lessons to be learned from this cycle? Are the variables of the strategic environment such that it is impossible for the United States to build a peacetime Army that can accomplish its wartime mission without having to go through a complete redesign?

The current strategic environment is full of risks and opportunities. Major issues facing the United States revolve around terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, threats to space and cyberspace assets, dependence upon fossil fuels, climatic change, pandemic disease, failing states, global criminal networks, and the global economy.¹ Specific challenges such as China's growing military capabilities and economic influence, the uprisings associated with the Arab Spring, North Korea's provocative actions, and Iran's increasing ambitions in the Persian Gulf region are simply the beginning of a long list of potential threats that our Army must prepare for.

In some respects the current strategic environment is not all that different today than it was in 1919 following World War (WW) I. The war is won and the Nation is tired

of war. Huge government deficits and debt dominate domestic politics. It is difficult to imagine an immediate military threat to the continental United States. So then, what is the Army to do? What is its role? How should it invest for the future?

The principle question is this: By looking to past drawdown experiences, are there key areas of investment that will enable the Army to rapidly adapt itself to the future needs of the Nation? This paper examines three post-war drawdown eras from the Army's history: post-WWI (1919-1938), post-WWII/Korea 1946-1965, and post-Vietnam (1973-1980). Starting with the strategic and domestic environments of each era; the paper will describe investment decisions made by the Army. Then using the first battle of the next conflict, the performance of the resulting Army shaped by those decisions is evaluated.

The investment decisions will be described in terms of end strength, force structure, leadership development, modernization, procurement, doctrine, and readiness. End strength is the overall number of personnel in each component of the Army as authorized by law. End strength becomes one of the primary drivers for personnel policies. Force structure is the number, size, and composition of the units that comprise the Army; e.g., divisions, brigades, battalions.² Leadership development is the professional schooling and professional development of the commissioned and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of the force. Modernization looks at research and development efforts, while procurement concentrates on the actual expenditures to buy equipment. Doctrine is the underlying foundation through which Army describes the missions and tasks it performs. Readiness is a measurement of the ability the Army to perform its assigned missions and tasks. The objective is to compare these seven

investment areas across the three drawdown eras, identify common trends, and propose recommendations for future areas of Army investment.

The Army after World War I (1919-1938)

Strategic Environment

The international environment following WWI offered great promise of a peaceful and threat free environment. After nearly four years of intensive warfare, the great powers of Europe suffered incredible losses of manpower and were highly in debt. Germany was disarmed. Russia was in the midst of a destructive revolution. Japan was far away and only considered a naval threat. The idea that wars could be avoided through negotiation was gaining strength throughout the international community.³

Domestically, the environment was not favorable to a large active Army. The Army in WWI had grown to a force of nearly four million, and now was an expensive liability costing upwards of \$50 million per day (\$763 million in 2013 dollars).⁴ In 1919, the Nation was operating under a deficit that equated to nearly 17% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the National Debt reached nearly 35% of GDP. Government spending equated to 24% of GDP.⁵ The pressure to cut government spending, eliminate the deficit, and reduce the debt was very strong. The deployment of an Army to fight in Europe was considered an “aberration” that was not likely to be repeated any time soon.⁶ With no apparent threats; a large standing Army was a prime target for budget cuts.

Economically, much of the world prospered following the end of WWI. Then, in 1929, the Great Depression struck the U.S. stock market. In quick order, the U.S. and world economies dropped into the deepest and longest depression of the twentieth century.⁷

Strategic Guidance

At the start of WWI, the Army was consumed with mobilization and deployment. Then it was fully engaged with the task of demobilization. Not much strategic thought was given regarding what kind of Army was appropriate for a post-war United States.⁸

The Army Chief of Staff at the time was General Peyton March. In 1919, General March proposed to Congress that the active Army end strength consist of 509,000 enlisted men and 26,000 officers.⁹ This proposal was significantly larger than the pre-war Army and met with considerable skepticism by Congress. For comparison, in 1914 the Army consisted of 98,511 enlisted and 5,033 officers.¹⁰ The proposed force structure included one field army of five corps composed of four divisions each.¹¹ The divisions would have their full structure, but would only be manned to 50% of their authorized strength.¹² The remainder would be filled by conscripts in wartime. General March was unable to defend the strategic rationale for such a large force structure; therefore Congress rejected it as too expensive and unrealistic.¹³

This then set the stage for Congress to provide the Army strategic guidance in the form of the National Defense Act of 1920. This act established three components for the Army: the active Army, the National Guard, and the Organized Reserve. It went on to specify three missions for the active Army. The first mission was to prepare the civilian components (e.g., the National Guard and the Organized Reserve) for war. The second was to occupy overseas garrisons (e.g., Philippines and the Panama Canal). The third was to maintain a small regular Army force for immediate tactical use. The active Army end strength was to consist of 280,000 enlisted soldiers and 18,000 officers.¹⁴

Army Decisions

While Congress, through the National Defense Act of 1920, was very specific in directing the structure and missions of the Army, they did not back up that strategic direction and provide the appropriate funding to match those same directives. Immediately following the war, Army spending equaled about 11.5% of GDP, but dropped, in 1920 to 1.8%. From 1922 on, Army spending relative to GDP steadily decreased from 0.6% GDP to a low of about 0.4% of GDP in 1927.¹⁵ Army spending then stayed consistently at about .4% GDP until 1930 when it began a slow rise. Some of those spending increases can be attributed to Depression era works projects (e.g., Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933) and development and growth of the Army Air Corps.¹⁶ However, despite these increases in spending, overall Army spending remained at less than 1% GDP until 1941.¹⁷ The Army, faced with a strategy/resource mismatch, focused on force structure, end strength, and leadership development at the expense of modernization, procurement, and doctrine.

Implementation of Army Decisions

End strength – The active Army described in the National Defense Act of 1920 was quickly reduced in 1922 to an authorization of 118,000 enlisted and 12,000 officers.¹⁸ Personnel policies in place at the time encouraged the retention of WWI veterans; therefore, to accomplish the dual tasks of meeting end strength and retaining experienced veterans the Army created pay, promotion, and retention policies that favored WWI veterans. For instance: pay was tied to time in service, not rank; promotions were tied to vacancies, not merit; and an officer could easily serve in his present rank until he was retirement eligible.¹⁹ While the personnel policies

accomplished their task of retaining WWI veterans, they did nothing to encourage innovation, initiative, personal growth, or competition.

Force Structure – The National Defense Act of 1920 force structure was organized into nine corps areas, each with one active, two National Guard, and three Organized Reserve divisions. In reality, the active Army was unable to man this force structure. At the time, one active division alone required 20,000 soldiers. If fully manned, the Army force structure required in excess of 180,000 soldiers.

Instead, the Army chose to man three under strength active divisions of 6,000 soldiers and six under strength brigades of about 2000 soldiers. In other words, each formation was manned at less than 30% of its authorized strength.²⁰ This force structure/end strength mismatch created a rank heavy force structure that satisfied the Army's intent to keep many WWI experienced officers in the Army while working jobs appropriate to their skills and rank. Additionally, by not fully manning operational units, the Army was able create a force pool from which officers and NCOs could be detailed away from the operational Army in order to train the reserve components and meet other personnel requirements.

Leadership development – During the inter-war era, the Army placed a priority on professional development and civil schooling. More Army schools were established during the inter-war era, than at any previous time in Army history. Examples of these schools are the Cavalry, Artillery, and Infantry Schools plus the Command and General Staff College, and the War College.²¹ To supplement the residence school program, in 1922 the Army began a correspondence school program.²² Other professional development opportunities included advanced degrees through civil schooling and

General Headquarters maneuvers (similar to command post exercises today) later in the inter-war era.

Modernization – The Army did limited modernization during the era from 1919 to 1938. The primary factor contributing to this was limited funds. The Army only spent about \$2 million (\$33 million in 2013 dollars) on modernization over the 13 years 1920-1933.²³ Another contributing factor was the volume of materiel left over from WWI and the desire to use it before buying new.²⁴ A third factor was that there was no new doctrine to spur new research.

Procurement – Congress was adamant that the ammunition and equipment bought during WWI be used before any new materiel was procured. As late as 1933, senior Army leadership supported this view and argued in front of Congress against new procurement.²⁵ However, senior Army leadership support for this policy may have been misplaced due to the lack of doctrine development and environmental scanning that should have informed the Army leadership of the need for modernized equipment to replace obsolescent equipment.²⁶

Doctrine – The Army did not have a doctrine development system during the inter-war years.²⁷ Immediately following WWI, the Army placed great emphasis on capturing its war experience and updating doctrine. The successful result of this was Field Service Regulation (FSR) 1923.²⁸ However, since the Army did not have a systemic process to review and update doctrine, FSR 1923 was not updated again until 1939 when FSR 1939 was published. While FSR 1923 accurately captured the lessons learned from WWI, FSR 1939 was written by officers 20 years removed from combat

and uninformed by things such as large scale exercises or an understanding of doctrinal and equipment advances being developed by other nations.²⁹

Readiness – The policy of having a large force structure that was only partially manned manifested itself in the lack of readiness of the Army. Funding was not available to maneuver units in the field. Even if funding had been available, the units were not manned at a level to support such training. There was no way for the Army to gain experience in such things as maneuvering large units, sustaining large combat formations, integrating combined arms, or even simply experimenting on a large scale with alternative doctrine. This remained the case until very late in the era. As war in Europe began to grow more imminent, the Army began to do more and larger exercises, but manning levels and equipping shortages continued to limit their usefulness.³⁰

Assessment – North Africa 1942-1943

The Army that invaded North Africa and later fought at Kasserine Pass was a product of both the austere inter-war years and the crash modernization program of 1938-42. While that campaign was ultimately successful, there were several painful lessons learned that directly resulted from areas not emphasized during the inter-war years. As discussed previously, the Army sacrificed nearly everything to pay for end strength and force structure. Of all the other areas not emphasized, the greatest effect on the force was caused by the lack of doctrine development and low readiness during the inter-war years.

The U.S. was not doctrinally prepared to execute large scale operations like Operation Torch. For instance, during the Operation Torch landings, much of the planning focused on tactical requirements and overlooked or dismissed the strategic level integration of combat support and combat service support. The doctrine on how to

operate at the scale required for this campaign was incomplete. At the battle of Kasserine Pass even more doctrinal shortfalls appeared. Units did not plan or operate as a combined arms team, nor were they emplaced to provide mutually supporting fires. Throughout the entire campaign uncoordinated theater level logistics continued to add to the friction on the battlefield. Lastly, the inferiority demonstrated by U.S. combat vehicles and anti-tank weapons can also be linked to failed doctrine development and poor pre-deployment training.³¹

The Army after WWII and Korea (1946-1965)

Strategic Environment

Following WWII, the Soviet Union rapidly transitioned from ally to a potential enemy. It consolidated its wartime gains by installing communist governments in the countries it occupied, and encouraged communist revolutions in other countries around its periphery. It maintained a large and modernized standing Army. In 1948, the Soviet Union conducted a land blockade of the Allied sectors of Berlin. In 1949 the Soviet Union exploded its first nuclear weapon. As a whole, these actions increased the hostility between eastern and western Europe and fostered the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This in turn spurred the formation of the Soviet led Warsaw Pact alliance.

In Asia other events began to influence the strategic environment. The Soviet Union continued to gain influence through their support to the Communist Chinese.³² The Communist Chinese defeated the Nationalist Chinese. Communist insurgencies begin in Vietnam, Malaya and the Philippines. Korea was divided into a Communist north and a Democratic south, quickly leading to war.

Domestically, when WWII ended there was a great rush to bring soldiers home and reduce the size of the Army. To fight the war, the Army (including the Army Air Forces) grew to over 8.2 million soldiers. Subsequently, the Army demobilized at an astounding rate and by the end of 1946 the Army was reduced to 1.2 million soldiers. The downward trend continued and by the end of 1947 the Army was further reduced to approximately 989,000 soldiers.³³ This rapid demobilization, while politically justifiable and popular at home, was not strategically aligned to the international situation, particularly in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia.

In 1945, government spending on defense equated to 36% of GDP.³⁴ The Army's spending equated to 22% of GDP. Stacked on top of all this government spending, the national debt equated to 121% of GDP. There was great concern that following the war the U.S. would slip back into another financial depression caused by the rapid transition from a wartime economy to a peacetime economy.³⁵ Despite this threat, the government cut defense spending dramatically and by 1948 defense spending was down to 4% of GDP and there was a slight surplus of revenue.³⁶ The Army's share of spending dropped to a post WWII low of about 1% of GDP.

Another factor that influenced the domestic environment was the establishment of the Department of Defense in 1947. Not only did competition for funds become more intense through the establishment of a third military department (the Air Force), the Army and Navy both had to adapt to new roles in the defense establishment. Prior to this, they operated in relatively separate budget environments, and therefore the Secretary of War and Army Chief of Staff (and similarly the Secretary of the Navy and Chief of Naval Operations) had tremendous influence regarding how to apply policy and

resources to address Army issues. Now that the Secretary of War became the Secretary of Defense with centralized budgeting authority, the Army and Navy both lost their dominating roles in the defense establishment and faced a steep learning curve on how to function in this new environment. This new environment almost certainly played a significant role in the serious inter-service rivalries that plagued this era.

Strategic Guidance – National Security Council Paper 68 (NSC 68): The New Look, and Flexible Response

During this era there were three distinct sets of national security policy guidance. The first became known as NSC 68. The second was known as “The New Look”, and the third became known as “Flexible Response.” The common objective of these three strategies was containment of the Soviet Union. How these three strategies approached that objective varied considerably.

Issued by the National Security Council on April 14, 1950, NSC 68 focused upon five major areas:

1) Defend the Western Hemisphere and essential allied areas in order that their war-making capabilities can be developed, 2) Provide and protect the mobilization base while the offensive forces required for victory were being built up, 3) Conduct offensive operations to destroy vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity, and to keep the enemy off balance until the full offensive strength of the United States and its allies can be brought to bear, 4) Defend and maintain the lines of communication and base areas, and 5) Provide such aid to allies as is essential to the execution of their role.”³⁷

One primary element of NSC 68 was the idea that there would be a period of maximum danger in the near term. The ultimate result of NSC 68 was that it increased the nation’s reliance upon the offensive capability of the Air Force (both nuclear and conventional) while reducing the requirement for standing ground and naval forces.

The New Look, as described in NSC 162/2 of 30 October 1953, altered the policies of NSC 68 in that the Eisenhower Administration did not see the expansion of the Soviet Union as simply a near term threat, but instead a long term problem that needed a long term policy. In this policy, the United States emphasized reliance on strategic nuclear weapons to deter potential threats, both conventional and nuclear, from the Eastern Bloc of nations headed by the Soviet Union. This reliance on strategic nuclear weapons continued to minimize the role of ground forces in future conflicts.

Flexible Response, implemented in 1961, was the new defense strategy of the Kennedy Administration. It was a step back from the reliance on strategic nuclear weapons promoted by the New Look and instead it provided for a plan of stages to deal with enemy aggression quickly and in a non-nuclear way. The first stage of this plan was Direct Defense. This called for forward deployed forces to fight conventionally in order to defend our allies. The second stage of this plan was called Deliberate Escalation. In this phase, forces would begin to employ tactical nuclear weapons in order to prevent Soviet forces from overwhelming NATO forces. The last stage was called General Nuclear Response. This stage was effectively the same as the massive retaliation with strategic nuclear weapons of the New Look strategy and was based upon the nuclear triad of land and sea based ballistic missiles, and manned bombers. The biggest change brought by Flexible Response the development of specialized forces that provided the President differing levels of capability to respond to crisis and conflict.

Army Decisions

Following WWII, the Army focused almost exclusively on downsizing and occupation duties. There was little emphasis on organizing for the future. When the

conflict in Korea began, the Army employed much the same doctrine and equipment as that was employed in WWII. For the Army, Korea was a validation of the Army's essential role in any future armed conflict. However, as seen above, that is not how the civilian leadership viewed the role of Army. Following Korea, the Army responded to the new strategic guidance in two distinct phases, named for convenience of this analysis, after the incumbent Chief of Staff. The first is the Ridgeway phase and the second is the Taylor phase.

The Ridgeway phase lasted from 1953 to 1955. In this phase the Army took a 28% reduction in end strength and a 40% reduction in spending.³⁸ This equated to a reduction from 3.5% to 2.5% GDP.³⁹ The Army vigorously opposed the New Look strategy and the reliance upon nuclear weapons and chose instead to focus once again upon maintaining end strength and force structure.⁴⁰ There were no significant doctrinal, organizational, or modernization initiatives.

The Taylor Phase lasted from 1955 to 1959. Taylor was also an outspoken critic of the New Look strategy; however, unlike Ridgeway, he also laid out the logical underpinnings of a strategy that would later be adopted by the Kennedy Administration as the Flexible Response strategy. Furthermore he had a vision of how the Army needed to change in order to stay relevant on the modern battlefield. Taylor's approach was to provide the President with a technologically advanced Army equipped with a variety of capabilities that could function on both a nuclear and non-nuclear battlefield.⁴¹ During this four year period, the Army's share of GDP dropped another 25% to 1.87%, but then remained relatively steady until 1965 when the Vietnam War created a growth in the defense budget.⁴²

Implementation of Army Decisions-Ridgeway Phase 1953-55

End strength – At the end of the Korean War in 1953, Army end strength was 1.4 million soldiers and rapidly declined to 1.1 million soldiers in 1955. Throughout these reductions, Ridgeway continuously emphasized the importance of the soldier and put into place personnel policies aimed at retention. These policies included: increased pay and allowances, reenlistment bonuses, and improved family housing.⁴³

Force Structure – Throughout the end strength reductions, Ridgeway maintained the number of active divisions at 20. He did this by reducing the size of the divisions and simultaneously eliminating many initial entry training centers.⁴⁴

Leadership development – Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, first published in 1955, established a career development pattern for officers that would effectively remain in place until 1973. Officer careers were divided into four phases: Junior Officer, Command and Staff, Field Grade, and Final Career Management Period. Officers were encouraged to obtain a broad variety of experience in different positions. Selection for battalion and brigade command was a Division commander responsibility.

Modernization – No significant modernization took place during the Ridgeway phase.

Procurement – Like the era following WWI, the Army was forced to rely upon materiel procured during the Korean War by stretching out new procurement over 15 years.

Doctrine – Ridgeway rejected any suggestion that nuclear weapons changed the way the Army should operate.⁴⁵ WWII doctrine still applied and therefore few doctrinal changes emerged.

Readiness – Large force structures and limited funds once again conspired to constrain Army readiness. Ridgeway attempted to offset the end strength / force structure imbalance by reducing both the size of the combat division, and by reducing the institutional army.⁴⁶ Standardization of training suffered as the task of training initial entry soldiers moved from the institutional Army to individual tactical units.

Compounding the training issue, continental U.S. based units were at a lower manning level than their overseas counterparts and therefore faced more difficulty assuming the responsibility of training the new soldiers.⁴⁷

Implementation of Army Decisions-Taylor Phase 1955-59

End strength – Continued to steadily decline to 862,000 in 1959, a 78% decrease in four years.⁴⁸

Force Structure – Taylor directed the redesign of the Army around a concept called the Pentomic Division. This smaller division design incorporated technological innovation and organizational changes in order to make the Army more agile and survivable on both a nuclear and non-nuclear battlefield. While innovative, this redesign effort was short lived for several reasons. First, the Pentomic division required technological and mobility capabilities that did not exist in the force. Second, the requirement to operate in both a nuclear and non-nuclear environment created difficult to solve readiness requirements. Lastly, the organizational design eliminated the battalion echelon of command, thereby creating a leadership development challenge for field grade officers. Because of these issues, the Army quickly reverted to a more conventional divisional design shortly after Taylor left the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) position.⁴⁹

Leadership development – Taylor implemented policies to identify and promote talented, forward thinking officers on the army staff. He also established the Coordination Group in order to provide a means to encourage greater integration of army views and ideas.⁵⁰ Lastly, he continued to improve and expand the Army school system.

Modernization – Taylor renewed emphasis on research and development and technological innovation. He attempted to centralize research and development by appointing a Chief of Research and Development equal in status to the other Deputy Chiefs of Staff.⁵¹ Taylor also embraced tactical nuclear weapons and their integration all the way down to the battalion level.⁵² While the Army experienced an overall reduction in spending, research and development spending increased by about 25%.⁵³ These modernization efforts continued long after Taylor left the CSA position. For instance, it was during this period that the Army first explored the concept of a turbine powered helicopter that later became the UH-1 Iroquois.⁵⁴

Procurement – Procurement was still very limited due to investments made during the Korean War, however, the investments made in modernization efforts during Taylor's era in the late 1950s, would come to fruition in the mid- to late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵⁵ This length of time highlights the amount of time required for research based innovations to produce new combat capability.

Doctrine – Taylor explored extensive changes in doctrine. The primary focus was to bring the Army into the nuclear age. Taylor's initial doctrinal and organizational changes were short lived, as operational testing demonstrated pitfalls in the basic Pentomic concept that were accentuated by shortcomings of the available equipment.

However, this redesign effort did serve to reinvigorate the Army's doctrinal process and develop the leaders that later in the 1970s successfully redesigned the Army following the Vietnam War.

Assessment – Vietnam and the Cold War

The first major battle of the Vietnam War between U.S. Forces and North Vietnamese Regulars took place in the Ia Drang Valley in the fall of 1965. The soldiers in the battle were carried there in UH-1D Iroquois helicopters. They were supported by aerial rocket artillery (helicopters armed with rockets), artillery positioned by helicopter, helicopter gunships, and close air support from the Air Force. Tying all of this together was newly developed Airmobile doctrine that could trace its roots to the doctrinal reinvigoration and modernization effort started by General Taylor.

In this battle, an Army infantry battalion landed in the vicinity of three North Vietnamese regiments and successfully defended itself for two days until replaced by another battalion. While the ultimate outcome of the Vietnam war in general will be debated into eternity, one significant fact is that green American soldiers held their own in the opening battle of a war in direct contrast to earlier first battles such as Kasserine Pass. This can be attributed to the significantly higher level of readiness of this unit compared to other American units in history on the eve of battle. What is especially noteworthy is the number of new operational concepts successfully employed in this battle. It was a demonstration that a doctrine based Army can generate requirements, equipment, and training to match environments that may or may not be foreseen just a few years into the future. Unfortunately, the doctrine did not evolve as the Vietnam War evolved.⁵⁶

In the 1950s the Army made a decision to forgo procurement in the near term in order to conduct research and development for long term modernization. When funds for procurement became available in the early 1960s, the Army had both the doctrinal basis, and the research and development ground work completed to take advantage of those funds and effectively field new capabilities.

The Army After Vietnam (1973 -1980)

Strategic Environment

As the U.S. drew down from its involvement in Vietnam, the International environment changed dramatically. The Soviet Union continued the modernization and growth of their armed forces. One example of this modernization and expansion is that between 1968 and 1978 the Warsaw Pact increased their armored divisions by 37% while during the same time frame NATO only increased their armored divisions by 15%. Offsetting the growth of Soviet influence in Western Europe was the chill in relations between the Soviet Union and China. In the Middle East, Israel fought a major war against the Arabs that was startling not only for the technical sophistication of the weapons used, but also the increased pace of battle brought by those sophisticated weapons. In Africa, Central America and South America, there were several Marxist revolutions supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union. The U.S. Embassy in Iran was occupied and the embassy staff held hostage which led to a failed rescue attempt by U.S. forces, highlighting growing shortcomings in U.S. capabilities. And to end the decade, an expansive and aggressive Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

The Nixon Administration attempted to slow the growing arms race through negotiation. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in 1969, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, and the Balanced

Force Reductions Talks in 1973 are examples of this negotiation. Additionally, trips by Nixon to Moscow and Beijing further emphasized the Administration's desire to negotiate.

Domestically, following the Vietnam War, the U.S. was experiencing a huge anti-war backlash. Richard Nixon resigned his Presidency amid scandal. High interest rates signaled a lagging economy. Public hostility and political activism grew from popular discontent with the government, concern regarding the potential for nuclear war, and concern for the environment.

In 1968 government spending equaled nearly 20% of GDP. Nearly half of that government spending (9% of GDP) was defense spending. Throughout the decade of the 1970s, total government spending continued at 19-20% of GDP mark, but defense spending rapidly dropped to about 4.5% of GDP. These cuts were especially hard on the Army. In 1968 Army spending equaled 2.75% of GDP, but by 1973 it had dropped to 1.5% of GDP and by 1979 it had dropped to 1.2% of GDP.⁵⁷

Strategic Guidance: The Nixon Doctrine

Nixon understood that there was very little public support for defense spending. In addition to the negotiated treaties mentioned above, he cut the defense budget significantly and ended the draft. He announced a new strategy that emphasized helping allies help themselves. He also changed the previous force sizing requirement of 2 ½ wars to 1 ½ wars. Lastly, he reduced the number of U.S. forces stationed overseas and tied forces to specific treaty obligations.⁵⁸

Army Decisions

Like the post WWII/Korea drawdown, the post Vietnam drawdown primarily spanned the terms of two Chiefs of Staff. The draw down and reorganization initiatives

were started by General Westmoreland and mostly finished by General Abrams. While each Chief's efforts could be examined independently, they are best examined together because they are so closely inter-related.

General Westmoreland focused on four priorities: 1) improve management, 2) implement the All Volunteer Army, 3) restart modernization programs, and 4) increase professionalism.⁵⁹ General Abrams continued Westmoreland's priorities and instituted three of his own: 1) development of a strategic vision for the Army, 2) changes to force structure, and 3) changes to the Army stationed in the United States.⁶⁰

Implementation of Army Decisions

End strength – Whereas previously the Army could rely upon the draft to achieve end strength numbers, now it was increasingly challenged to man the volunteer Army. In 1969, the Army end strength was 1.5 million soldiers. After a rapid drawdown through 1974, that end strength remained around 780,000 soldiers for the rest of the decade.⁶¹ The Army quickly learned that it needed to provide incentives, such as a college fund, in order to recruit quality soldiers and maintain the authorized end strength.

Force Structure – During the Vietnam War, active Army Force structure fell to 13 divisions but was funded for only 11. In 1974, General Abrams made the decision to expand the Army to 16 divisions without an increase in manpower or funding. Once again the Army embarked upon a deliberately hollow Army approach. General Abrams' rationale was that by reducing headquarters staffs, incorporating National Guard brigades in active formations, and the reduction of some support units, he could field a 16 Division force.⁶²

Leadership development – General Westmoreland instituted new Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management Systems (OPMS/EPMS). OPMS was now based upon

merit and centralized selections. Additionally, command tours were extended to 24-30 months.⁶³ EPMS defined a Non-Commissioned Officer “road map” for a successful career. Additionally, the NCO education system established the Sergeants Major Academy in order to provide an NCO education experience similar to the Army War College for Officers.⁶⁴

Modernization – General Abrams focused modernization resources on what became known as the “Big Five.” This effort produced the M1 Tank, M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Blackhawk, and the Patriot Air Defense Missile System.⁶⁵

Procurement – The limited funds available in the 1970s curtailed the Army’s buying power. Once again the Army had to live on the materiel procured during the previous war. The difference this time, however, was that with the limited funds available, the Army was developing the materiel and doctrine in order to be able to act once the funds did become available during the Reagan Administration.

Doctrine – General Abrams emphasis on developing a strategic vision for the Army paid great dividends in that it provided a doctrinal foundation that described what the Army needed to be able to do. Key to this vision was the establishment of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to oversee the development of training and doctrine. Now the Army had a systemic process to review, update and assess new doctrine. Almost immediately TRADOC updated FM 100-5 Operations and created a new overarching doctrine called Active Defense. The doctrine of Active Defense, while heavily criticized; spurred the discussion and the doctrinal process throughout the Army and ultimately led to the successful doctrine called AirLand Battle.⁶⁶

Readiness – General Abrams also established Forces Command (FORSCOM) to oversee readiness and training of the continental US based Army.⁶⁷ In particular, FORSCOM oversees the Combat Training Centers where units could go to perform force-on-force training in a field environment, under stressful and realistic simulated combat conditions, while being evaluated against the standards and evaluation procedures established by TRADOC.⁶⁸

Assessment –Desert Storm

On August 2, 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait. In response, the U.S. deployed 7 divisions over a period of less than six months, defeating and expelling the Iraqi army from Kuwait with seeming ease. There are several keys to this victory, all of which can be traced to the reorganization efforts of General Westmoreland and General Abrams.

That Army was led by officers and soldiers who were educated through OPMS/EPMS. It used a doctrine called AirLand battle that was developed at TRADOC through a systemic doctrine development process. It was trained at the Combat Training Centers through realistic exercises that forced the understanding and employment of doctrine. Lastly, it employed the Big 5 weapon systems of the prioritized 1970s modernization effort.

In the 1970s, the Army again traded near term procurement for long term modernization. When funds became available in the 1980s, the Army was prepared to take advantage of those funds and procure the quantity of equipment necessary to actually modernize the Army.

Analysis of Post-War Drawdown Decisions

Since the end of WWI, the Army has gone through eras of growth and downsizing. Each era of downsizing has its unique aspects, though they do share

several common trends. The Army made deliberate decisions regarding what to prioritize based on how the Army saw the world. Some of these decisions paid off, others did not.

During the post-WWI years the Army placed most of its emphasis on end strength, force structure, and leadership development. To pay for these choices, the Army chose to forgo modernization, procurement, doctrine updates, and most critically, readiness. The end result was a large number of units not properly manned or trained to accomplish their assigned mission; in modern terms, a hollow Army.

During the first half of the post-WWII/Korea era, the Army once again emphasized end strength and force structure. These decisions led to another hollow Army. However, during the second half of this post-WWII/Korea era, the Army changed its priorities and funded modernization at a level similar to the funds expended on end strength. The Army also placed more emphasis on doctrine development. With a change in Presidents and national strategies, the Army was ready to begin procuring new equipment such as the M60 tank, M109 self propelled howitzer, and the M113 armored personnel carrier. It was also ready to field new organizational designs such as the air assault division.

Post-Vietnam Army decisions followed a different path from previous draw downs. While the Army once again emphasized end strength and force structure, creating hollow units that were not well trained or equipped, it also managed to create a new officer management system, invest in doctrine reform, and invest in research for future modernization.

Common to these post-war eras is the Army's tendency to emphasize end strength and force structure over other budget priorities. While the rationale seems logical, the end result is less than satisfying. In every case the Army created units that could not train due to a combination of shortages of personnel and funding. Additionally, large force structures made it difficult to equip the Army with updated equipment due to the cost of doing so.

A better approach would be to avoid over-structuring the Army and concentrate investments in three key areas: 1) units manned at or near their authorized strength to facilitate training and readiness, 2) continue vigorous doctrine development and instill that doctrine through realistic combat training center exercises in order to prevent the stagnation of capabilities, and 3) a sufficient modernization effort informed by doctrine to support eventual procurement of advanced capabilities.

Manning units at or near their authorized strength enables those units to conduct realistic training. This is important for several reasons. First it provides the unit leadership planning and operational experience. The kind of experience that is transferable across many organizations and missions. Second, every training event provides an opportunity to assess and further develop doctrine. Lastly, a manned and trained unit is easier to adapt to emerging missions compared to building a unit from scratch. This last point emphasizes the requirement for the Army to retain flexibility and adaptability towards a changing world environment.

Continuous doctrine development and enforcement of that doctrine through realistic combat training center exercises was one of the key factors leading to the success of Desert Storm. The environment will continue to evolve. A systemic process

that evaluates current doctrine against the environment, assesses unit readiness through the ability to execute doctrine, and provides feedback from unit assessments to the doctrine development process is essential. Over the last ten years of war, the doctrine process may not have kept up with what units were actually tasked to do. Reinvigorating this systemic process is critical to the future success of the Army.

A modernization effort informed by doctrine is another key area for investment. As in past draw down periods, Army procurement accounts are sure to be cut dramatically. The Army of the 1980s benefited from the narrowly focused research and development effort during the 1970s despite limited funding. The same idea is still valid today. Focused investment in research and development could yield advanced capabilities that, when needed, could be manufactured quickly to support the next war. The Army would not attempt to field large quantities of new equipment every few years, but instead it would only procure small quantities to satisfy operational testing and limited fielding.

Conclusion

The Army is in another post-war draw down era. In 2012, the Secretary of Defense directed the Army to reduce its end strength from wartime level of 562,000 active duty soldiers to 490,000 soldiers by 2017. As budget issues continue to dominate the domestic environment, Office of the Secretary of Defense and Congress are likely to follow historical precedence and see the Army as a potential bill payer to solve budget issues. To remain relevant, the Army must draw upon the lessons learned in previous draw down eras and apply those lessons to the emerging Army of the 2020s. Defense Department and Army leaders, despite reduced budgets, can make wise investments that will bear fruit for the next generation of America's warriors.

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